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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,
APRIL 25, 2003

¶11. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for April 25, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

¶12. Bolge: The reverse shipment of the US military vehicles and equipment deployed in Turkey under "site preparation" accord was completed from the port of Iskenderun today. While the US military ship named "Cape Edmund" left the port, 250 US soldiers left for Incirlik AFB.

¶13. Evrensel: The State Security Court of Adana (SSC) postponed until May 22 the case involving 81 persons charged with "assisting and harboring" the PKK for filing petitions demanding Kurdish to be put among the selective classes. The SSC initially accused the individuals of "PKK membership," but due to lack of evidence, the accusation was changed to "assisting and harboring the PKK." Because of the inmates' and their lawyers' demand for additional time for defense the court postponed the hearing to May ¶22.

¶14. Evrensel: The European Human Rights Court (EHRC) accepted the application concerning Suleyman Ekrem who was killed by security forces. Ekrem was abducted by force from his house in Elazig on November 29, 1999, and was killed by soldiers firing on him. As Ekrem's family did not receive any response to their complaint about the security forces, their lawyers appealed to the EHRC. The court asked the Turkish government to prepare its defense in writing by July 2, 2003. The president of the Tunceli Bar Association, Huseyin Aygun, said the laws in Turkey were not democratic, and Turkey should amend its laws to harmonize them with the European concept of human rights.

¶15. Tercuman/Sabah/Milliyet: Claudia Roth, in charge of Germany's human rights issues, held meetings with her Turkish counterparts in Ankara yesterday. Roth called on Mehmet Elkamis, TNA's President of Human Rights Inspection Committee, and is expected to call on Foreign and Interior Ministers as well. Roth will also attend the hearing of former DEP parliamentarians, Leyla Zana, Hatip Dicle, Orhan Dogan, and Selim Sadak's at the State Security Court of Ankara today. Roth, who will go to the southeast to meet with the leaders of human rights associations and religious groups, and will also hear about humanitarian relief to Iraq.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

¶16. Turkiye/Bolge/Hurriyet/Milliyet: The President of Adana's Chamber of Agriculture (CA), Cumali Dogru, said 250 thousand tons of wheat imported by the Turkish Soil Products Department (TSPD) should not be sent to market before the harvest season in May and June because it would decrease the demand for the wheat from the Cukurova plain, and would put the producers financially in a difficult position. The wheat imported by TSPD is scheduled to arrive in Turkey during April 24-25.

HOLTZ